

TRANSCRIPT

[New British gastopub is set to debut in the Sacramento area](#)

Podcast interview with Andy Wylie, Owner of Stirling Bridges; and Janelle Kozyra, member of Kimco Realty's blogging team

Janelle: Greetings everyone. Janelle Kozyra here for a Kimco Realty podcast. Today we have with us Andy Wylie. And Andy is the owner of a new restaurant in Carmichael, Calif., called Stirling Bridges. The grand opening is slated for this weekend. The restaurant is in a Kimco center called Madison Plaza, which is just outside of Sacramento.

It's an upscale British pub that is moving into a space previously occupied by another British pub, so if you're from Sacramento, you might remember Brother Oliver's, which was a pretty well-known pub at the time, and closed down several years ago.

But Andy is really ushering in a brand new place for English fare and beers and cocktails, and judging by a couple of the photos, it looks like it's going to be a really popular spot. So Andy, it's a pleasure to have you with us today.

Andy: Thank you.

Janelle: So how are you feeling about everything with your restaurant just opening up?

Andy: It's coming together. We've been working hard on this for the last eight or nine months now, and all the plans that we put together are certainly coming together in front of our eyes. So we're very keen to open. We've had a few hiccups with ABC, on the liquor license side of it, but we've solved them. We're just waiting for a final signature, so as soon as that comes in, we'll be ready to go.

Janelle: Can you give us any sneak peek into what your grand opening plans are?

Andy: We have a pipe band and we're going to have that at the back of the building. Basically we have a band that's going to play that night as well, which is a band from the Bay Area. They're just a bunch of amateurs and friends of ours, so they're going to come up and play. But basically we're just going to open the doors, and hope the locals will come in.

We have a little bit of advertising on the radio, not an awful lot yet. We're going to keep the most of that 'til we open, but we've done a commercial for that. And the response from the people actually passing and calling in, we should get quite a few hundred people just popping in, because we've created quite a ruckus in the area. As you said all of the Oliver's Pub people are all chomping at the bit to get in here.

Janelle: So tell us what it's like inside—the features, the amenities, the food, and everything.

Andy: Previously, when it was Brother Oliver's, it was sectioned into rooms. It was all at sort of the front end of the building, with the entrance and the kitchen at the back. And there was a small room for private functions at the back of the building. We've actually changed that.

We've taken out a big wall, a foundation wall, and put in some structural reconditioning and moved the toilets to the back end of the building to get away from the front door. We now have a 50-foot bar, which wraps around the wall, the foundation wall. And we have river rock on the bar and on the back of the gantry, where the bottles of booze will be.

So we've tried to go to the bridge side of it. We've got one side as a restaurant side, where people will be, can make reservations. And one side is the bar, and then around the back end of the bar is the sports side. And then across from the sports side, we have what we call the Churchill Room, which is sectioned off. It's paneled all the way around. It's got a fireplace. It's got a television inside it, which is a two-way television and a mirror.

So when anyone's having a meeting in there, they can either turn the TV on and plug into the HDMI cord that we've left there on the socket, and they can do a presentation on the TV, or they can turn the TV off, and it just returns to a mirror. So we've tried to cover all the bases— restaurant, pub, and sports bar.

Janelle: What sorts of food and drinks are you going to be offering?

Andy: We have a full-range bar, so we already have 15 signature British cocktails that we're going to try and push, and hope people will take to them. Some of them are called the Sherlock, Strawberry Fields, a Mick Jagger. We have the Queen, we have the Abbey, and all these different cocktails are signature ones specifically served in Britain.

The food side of it, we have the British fare—the fish and chips, the bangers and mash. We've stretched out to get to the California market as well. We can't just stay with fish and chips. So we have rump steak and we have rib eye steak. We have a selection of different salads. We also have an Italian pizza oven which can do a pizza in three minutes flat. So our big thing here is we have a lot of pizzas to put out, and hopefully we're going to do it rapidly and not take too long.

That's the basis. We're basically a British pub with a gastropub of foods. And I don't know if you know this, the history of gastropubs, but in the early '90s, British pubs were starting to fail. People weren't going out to them. They started looking around to see what was the difference between the restaurants that were not failing and the pubs that were, and it was the food.

So there was a movement to increase the level and the sale of food, and that was very successful. And we've brought that here. So the normal pub would be get some food while you're having a drink. But now we've change it around to have a drink while you're having some good food.

Janelle: Who is your executive chef, Andy?

Andy: Shayne Myers. Shane's got plenty of experience in the Sacramento area. He's trained with some of the big companies, like BJs. And he's been at P.F. Chang's, and he's got quite a lot of experience. This is his first real executive chef role, and he's taken it with both hands and run with it. So we're very pleased with the stuff he's putting out now, because obviously he's trying the food now, we're trying the food he's putting out, so he's doing a great job.

We'll be doing blogs on our Facebook and our website that he'll be involved in, putting in his specials and giving his slant on the food we do, on the type of food we do, and what he likes to add to it. One of

the menu items we have is a Caesar salad, but it's not done with romaine salad. It's done with kale. And it's crunchy and it's excellent.

Janelle: So what customer base are you targeting with Stirling Bridges?

Andy: When we did the due diligence on the area, it's predominantly blue collar as opposed to white collar. We looked to different areas around us, like Elk Grove and Folsom, which are extremely busy and they have very successful restaurants in their areas. And we looked up the price mark, and round about here, we have five or six areas like Fair Oaks and Orangevale and Citrus Heights and Gold River.

And all these areas around us, we're trying to hit the blue market, the blue-collar market. So our prices are between \$10 and \$15 for most entrees. The rib eye steak goes a little bit higher, but certainly the soccer clubs and the local community colleges and the hospitals that have staff there, that's a customer base that we're trying to expand or even create.

Janelle: And Andy, Stirling Bridges is not your first restaurant. You've also started and have since sold, though, Streets of London, which is also an English pub-style restaurant in Sacramento, and you had a few locations for that. So what made you decide to move from Streets of London and launch Stirling Bridges?

Andy: That's a personal thing. I had a business partner at the time, a very close friend. We came to the States to start the Streets of London. We thought we'd come over for a few months, open a pub, have a laugh, and then move on. But it got so successful so quickly, that we stayed. We expanded to three locations.

And then the last couple of years, whether it was itchy feet on my part, or whether we just weren't getting along as business partners and friends anymore, I'd say I wanted to get away from the situation that we created at the Streets of London.

Streets of London had to evolve, in my opinion, and we weren't evolving. It's changed a little bit since I've left, I understand that. But at the time, I wanted to move on to something bigger and better, and that's where Stirling Bridges came.

Janelle: Got it. So how did you come up with the name "Stirling Bridges?"

Andy: It's an inside joke, a little bit. I'm Scottish. One of my partners is English, and the other partner is American, but his history's English. So when we were looking at stuff—I come from Johnstone, which is right next to Elderslie, in Scotland. And Elderslie is where William Wallace possibly came from. There are three or four areas that say that William Wallace came from—from the "Brave Heart" movie.

And the only battle that the Scottish beat the English at was the Stirling Bridges. And so I put that forward to my English partner and the other partner who has got English heritage, as sort of a joke. But we wanted something that was going to be catchy, and Bridges, The Bridges, hopefully will be another name that will be catchy as well.

Janelle: What do you think you're taking from your experience with Streets of London and putting into your new experience now with Stirling Bridges?

Andy: Well, London, we had a light area of customer base. We started at lunch times. We had the older clientele. At dinner, we had quite a varied clientele, but it was more just pub food. At night, we more or less became a little bit of a night club. We started off with beer and wine, and we went into hard liquor.

So I had many years of being at 18th and J, right in the middle of Midtown in its growth. When we started the pub, there were three bars in our area. And they were all clubs—the Press Club, the Torch Club, the Zebra Club, and people looked at us as if we were mad, because we were coming into a place that wasn't very busy.

If you look at Midtown now in Sacramento, it's the hub of Sacramento. It's where people go to eat and drink. I think I've learned through experiences of going through that how to be a very eclectic place where people had to come to us as a location, or destination, to being part of the destination of the whole of Midtown.

So I think I bring a lot of that to this area as well. We want to be a location, a destination. But we also have the people in this area that have to travel. If they want to go anywhere from this area, they have to travel five to 10 miles to get to any sort of city or town. They go to Folsom. They go to Roseville. They go to Sacramento. So it's quite a trek for them to go away, and I think I can attract these people to come here.

Janelle: So Andy, many Sacramentans remember Brother Oliver's, which is the space that you're now occupying. And since it was also a British pub, do you feel like there's pressure or anything to sort of bring back some of that atmosphere and charm that so many locals enjoyed?

Andy: There's a little bit of pressure. Oliver's Pub is a big sign, it's probably 10 foot by 3 foot, and we've taken that off the monument and brought it inside, framed it, and put it on the wall. We like the idea of people remembering that Oliver's Pub was here for such a long time and so successful for so many years, and we hope to bring that to us as well.

We're a little bit different from them in that they liked the idea of enclosed spaces, and what their perception of what a British pub would be. These days, moving on, the British pub's perception is now big, wide, open windows that let the sun in, and we've done that to a certain extent.

Janelle: And aside from your grand opening coming up, are there any other big promotions or special events in the works that you can give us a sneak peek into?

Andy: Not at the moment. We've got radio advertising stuff and we're looking at a little bit of TV advertising. We have different things in the year, the different Saint's days that we like to celebrate. Obviously Paddy's Day is going to be the biggest one for us in March, but that's quite a step away yet.

But we will have things going along. We just have to find our feet first and see how many people will come through the door. If it's not as big a reception as we expect, then we'll have to scrub a little bit and find some stuff to put out there for people, to attract people.

But at the moment, I'm a bit leery of the fact that we have so many people coming to the door to look at the place and ask when we're opening, that if I do a little too over-the-top promotion and marketing, we will be over run, and that's no good for the servers or the food. So we're a little bit hesitant in marketing

it too much, but we will if it has to be done. Go out there and market and advertise ourselves and so people do know we're here.

Janelle: And so one aspect of that is your social media presence.

Andy: That's a lot of it. We put ourselves on Facebook. We have a website, which should be up soon. We took some pictures recently with the radio company that we deal with. They came and took some pictures of food and of the place. We were just waiting for some good photos to go up and go into our stuff, but we have another photo shoot which will go into Facebook.

We already have, I think, 300 hits on our Facebook page that we only put up a week ago or a few days ago, and we'll be looking to stretch that out. We have a company that will be actively marketing us on Facebook and getting us out there so that we can get our name known in this area. I think Facebook right now is one of the big attention attractors for people. A lot of people talk, and they're talking about it before we even open, so we rely on that a lot.

Janelle: Well, Andy, it sounds like you've got a lot in the works and we look forward to you opening up.

Andy: Right.

Janelle: Thanks for joining us today.

Andy: Always. Thanks for being our landlords and taking care of us in the future.

Janelle: Best of luck with everything.

Andy: OK, thank you very much.

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